Operation Round Up Frequently Asked Questions

What is Operation Round Up?

Operation Round Up (ORU) is a combined effort by Cullman Electric Cooperative and the Cullman Power Board to financially support local educators. The funding is provided by electric utility customers who have their monthly bill rounded up to the next whole dollar. Since the program was started locally in 1993, more than $6 million has been given to schools for classroom use.

Who serves on the Operation Round Up board?

The board is made up of sixteen (16) volunteers from the community. There are eleven (11) members appointed by the Board of Directors of Cullman Electric Cooperative and five (5) members appointed by the Cullman Power Board, representative of their service areas and schools within the districts. Each member serves a 3-year term and can be reappointed.

When does the Operation Round Up board meet and vote on grant applications?

The board meets 4 times a year. The schedule is available at https://cullmanec.com/operation-round.

What is the annual "paper" grant?

Each April, ORU awards a set amount of money to go toward paper for each school for the next school year.

APPLYING FOR A GRANT

Who can apply for an Operation Round Up grant?

Any teacher or educator with a private or public school in Cullman County, Meek or Addison.

What kinds of purchases can be made with Operation Round Up grant funds?

Per the by-laws that govern the ORU trust, funds "will be awarded to recipients who complete a grant application with the full name of the requested items and thorough description of how the items will be used to benefit the student educational purposes in the classroom." And "expenditures may not be used for salaries or capital improvements and may only be used to directly benefit students in the classroom."

What are some examples of grant requests that are not allowed?

Whether or not the application's request meets the requirements as outlined by the by-laws is at the discretion of the board members during voting. Some board members may vote yes, while others may vote no. Examples of previously denied items are cleaning supplies, food, field trips, clothing, printers, decorations, or curriculum books for teacher use only.

How do I apply for a grant?

Visit https://cullmanec.submittable.com/submit, and follow the instructions on the webpage.

Is there a minimum or maximum dollar amount I can request?

There is no minimum amount, but there is a max of $750 per teacher included in the grant request. Ex. Two teachers can apply for a grant together for a max of $1,500.

When and how often can I apply for an Operation Round Up grant?

You can apply for a grant once per grant cycle. Please refer to the Cullman EC website, Cullman Power Board website or other printed materials for a list of current cycle periods and cut-off dates.

What are some best practices when writing a grant application?

- Be specific – especially in the description of the products to be purchased and how it will benefit students in your classroom. Answer what and why. EX: I would like to purchase several manipulatives – a set of farm animal toys, a box of building blocks, and a kit of string beads – to use for language development and fine motor skills.
- Include a photo of the product(s).
- Get a quote for the full amount including taxes, shipping, and discounts. Request only what is needed to make the purchase.

THE GRANT APPROVAL PROCESS

Once I submit my grant application, what happens next?

The application will be reviewed by the board at their next meeting.

How does a grant application get approved by the Operation Round Up Board?

Each application is reviewed by the board members and voted on – either a yes or no vote from each board member. The number of yes votes is recorded. If a predetermined number of board members (usually the majority of the quorum present) votes yes, the grant is approved. If the grant application did not receive enough yes votes, it is denied.

Why was my grant not approved?

There is one of two reasons. The first reason may be there simply are not enough grant funds available to award your grant. See *'How does a grant application get approved by the Operation Round Up Board?'* for more information. You should submit your application again. The other reason may be the application did not meet the requirements or was too vague. See *'What kinds of purchases can be made with Operation Round Up grant funds?'* or *'What are some examples of grant requests that are not allowed?'* or '*What are some best practices when writing a grant application?'* for more information. Revise your application and re-apply.

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MAKING PURCHASES USING GRANT FUNDS

My grant application has been approved. Now what do I do?

You have 60 days to make your purchases and submit your receipts/invoices through your Operation Round Up account. If requested within 14 days of approval, you can receive an additional 30 day grace period.

I need to make my purchase from multiple stores, vendors, or websites. Is there anything I need to do differently than if I had just one transaction?

Please hold all receipts/invoices until all purchases have been made then submit all at once. It will prevent errors and having to issue multiple checks.

I spent more (or less) than I was awarded. What amount will be reimbursed?

The reimbursement will be for the lesser of the two amounts. For example, if you were awarded $100 yet spent $105, your reimbursement would be $100. The school would need to absorb the $5 that was overspent. Conversely, if you only spent $95, your grant reimbursement would be only $95 as well. As a best practice, get a detailed quote including taxes, shipping, and discounts before applying for the grant.

What type of documentation do I need to provide once I make my purchase(s) and who should receive it?

The receipts/invoices must include:

- Place and date of purchase
- An itemized list of the items purchased
- The total of the price paid including taxes, shipping, and discounts

This information should be uploaded in your submittable account under Forms.

How long do I have to make my purchase?

You have 60 days to make your purchases and submit your receipts/invoices to your school's bookkeeper. If requested within 14 days of approval, you can receive an additional 30 day grace period.

What happens if I do not make my purchase or no longer need the items that approved?

If the purchase is not made before the 60-day deadline and a 30 day extension was not requested within 14 days of approval, the grant will be voided and the reserved funds released. Notify Cullman Electric Cooperative if you no longer need the items so it can be voided as well.

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The item I wanted to purchase and wrote the grant application for is no longer available. What are my options?

If there is a comparable item, notify Cullman Electric Cooperative and see if there is a similar item from another vendor available. Note that the amount of the grant cannot be changed. If there is not a comparable item, the grant will need to be voided.

All or some of the items I ordered are on backorder and will not arrive before the 60-day deadline? What do I need?

Submit the invoices or other documentation that shows the items are on backorder and request a 30-day extension within 14 days of grant approval. In the situation of backorder, an additional 30-day extension can be allowed, but after 120 days the grant will be voided regardless of backorder status.

How does the school receive the reimbursement money?

Once all receipts/invoices are received for a grant, a check is made payable to the school and mailed.

Can the check be made out to me instead of the school?

No. The reimbursement is made to the school. Please work with the school for reimbursement if personal funds were used to make the purchase.

ADMINISTRATIVE/TECHNICAL/OTHER QUESTIONS

How do I get an Operation Round Up account?

Please create your own account at https://cullmanec.submittable.com/submit.

I have forgotten my username or password. What do I do?

Please contact submittable customer service at https://www.submittable.com/help/submitter.

I have had a name change or email address change. How do I change my account?

Please contact submittable customer service at https://www.submittable.com/help/submitter.

I am the principal or site administrator. What is my role?

The administrative approval step has been removed from the grant process. Once a teacher submits a grant application, it will be sent directly to the Operation Round Up Board for consideration.

To keep administrators informed, we will continue to provide updates regarding outstanding invoices and ORU changes.

I am the bookkeeper. What is my role?

Bookkeepers are no longer responsible for submitting grant invoices or receipts. Teachers will now upload all invoices and receipts directly through their grant account.

To help keep bookkeepers informed, teachers will be asked to forward their grant approval email after receiving approval notification. This forwarded email will include:

- Grant approval confirmation
- Approved item(s) and funding information
- Instructions for invoice submission

We will continue to track outstanding grants and will send 1–2 reminder emails to bookkeepers and administrators before the 60-day invoice submission deadline. This information will only be the teacher's name, grant #, and approved amount. ORU is not responsible for communicating the approved grant information to the bookkeeper. If you have questions about approved items, please reach out to the teacher to find out which items were approved and ask them to forward you their approval email.

SUBMITTING AN INVOICE

How do I submit an invoice?

After board approval, teachers will receive an email containing a link and instructions for submitting your invoice.

To receive reimbursement:

1. Submit an itemized invoice/receipt. If it is not itemized, you will not be reimbursed.
2. Invoices/receipts may come from multiple vendors, but they must be combined into one PDF document.
3. Include all pages of each invoice/receipt.

Do not include:

- Confirmation emails
- Purchase order (PO) requests
- Grant number
- Teacher name

These are no longer required on the invoice submission.

Need help?

- If you have issues logging into your account, please contact submittable customer service at https://www.submittable.com/help/submitter.

- If you have questions about invoices, please contact your school bookkeeper. If you still need help, please email operationroundup@cullmanec.com and include your school's bookkeeper.

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I am the bookkeeper. How can I find out which teachers received grants after a board meeting?

If you have questions about approved items, please reach out to the teacher to find out which items were approved and ask them to forward you their approval email.

DO YOU HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

Please contact Cullman Electric Cooperative by email at operationroundup@cullmanec.com or call 256-737-3200.